UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY CIVIL ACTION NO. 10-6196 (FLW)

CARYN LIEBERSON, etc.,

: TRANSCRIPT OF

1

Plaintiffs,

MOTION

v.

JOHNSON & JOHNSON CONSUMER :

COMPANIES, INC.,

: JUNE 28, 2012

Defendant.

CLARKSON S. FISHER UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE 402 EAST STATE STREET, TRENTON, NJ 08608

B E F O R E : THE HONORABLE FREDA L. WOLFSON, USDJ

APPEARANCES:

SHEPHERD, FINKELMAN, MILLER & SHAH, ESQUIRES BY: JAMES C. SHAH, ESQUIRE NATALIE FINKELMAN BENNETT, ESQUIRE On behalf of the Plaintiffs

McCARTER & ENGLISH, ESQUIRES BY: DAVID R. KOTT, ESQUIRE SARA F. MERIN, ESQUIRE On behalf of the Defendants

VINCENT RUSSONIELLO, C.C.R. OFFICIAL U.S.COURT REPORTER 138 PAXSON AVENUE, TRENTON, NEW JERSEY (609)588-9516

CERTIFICATION

PURSUANT TO SECTION 753, TITLE 28, USC, THE FOLLOWING TRANSCRIPT IS CERTIFIED TO BE AN ACCURATE TRANSCRIPTION OF MY STENOGRAPHIC NOTES IN THE ABOVE-ENTITLED MATTER.

S/Vincent Russoniello
VINCENT RUSSONIELLO, CCR
OFFICIAL U.S. COURT REPORTER

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4
            (In open court.)
1
 2
            THE CLERK: All rise.
 3
            THE COURT: Thank you.
            I'll have the appearances. Everyone else may
 4
 5
    be seated.
            MR. SHAH: Good morning, your Honor.
 6
            James Shah, Shepherd, Finkelman, Miller &
7
    Shah, on behalf of the plaintiff, Ms. Lieberson.
8
9
            MS. FINKELMAN: Natalie Finkelman, Shepherd,
    Finkelman, Miller & Shah, on behalf of the plaintiff.
10
            MR. KOTT: David Kott, K-O-T-T, McCarter &
11
12
    English, LLP, for the defendant.
            MS. MERIN: Sarah Merin, McCarter & English,
13
14
    for the defendant.
15
            THE COURT: Thank you. Have a seat.
            Who is going to be arguing for each side?
16
17
            MR. KOTT: I will for the moving party.
18
            MR. SHAH: I will for the plaintiff.
19
            THE COURT: All right.
            The next time around on this pleading.
20
21
            I have some questions for you.
22
            First of all, at this point, now, while your
23
    complaint references all four products, Mr. Shah,
    you've made clear that you are only pursuing on behalf
24
25
    of Ms. Lieberson two of the products.
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5
            MR. SHAH: That's correct, your Honor.
1
 2
            THE COURT: I think it had been misnamed at
 3
    one point, a typographical error, but what we've
    really got is the Bedtime Bath product and the lotion.
 4
 5
            Is that right.
 6
            MR. SHAH: That's correct, your Honor.
 7
            THE COURT: And those are the two.
8
            Out of curiosity, Mr. Shah, because I know
9
    that this is a putative action, you are not going to
    be pursuing any of those other products for the class.
10
            MR. SHAH: At this time, we are not, your
11
12
    Honor.
13
            THE COURT: Okay.
14
            I'm going to have some discussion with you
    people at some point, too, and I'll do it after our
15
16
    argument, as to whether you are really going to have
17
    an appropriate class representative in this case.
    I'll address that later on. That's not the motion
18
    before me today.
19
            But you are still pursuing the label based on
20
21
    purchases that Ms. Lieberson made in the 2008 and 2010
22
    time period, and you are pursuing this advertising in
23
    the form of internet advertising, print, as well
24
    as TV.
25
            MR. SHAH: As well as the television ads.
```

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6
    That's correct, your Honor.
1
 2
            THE COURT: We are still in the position where
 3
    Ms. Lieberson says, with regard to the advertising,
    she points to printouts from advertising essentially
 4
    today, a YouTube with regard to something from
 5
 6
    England, apparently, or Great Britain, and then says:
 7
    This is similar to what I saw.
8
            MR. SHAH: I think from plaintiff's
9
    perspective, your Honor, both with respect to the
    January 2008 purchase and the January 2010 purchase
10
    based on the "new and improved" moniker --
11
12
            THE COURT: By the way, let me stop you right
13
    there.
            I'm going to change gears.
14
            The "new and improved" moniker, as you call
    it, on the 2010, they say -- now, of course, I can
15
16
    only take the pleadings, but I can consider the labels
17
    which are integral to your pleadings.
            First of all, they have said in their
18
    opposition papers that those words, "new and
19
    improved," were on the 2008 label as well. You did
20
21
    not in your opposition papers dispute that in any way.
22
    In fact, if you look at the label, it has a 2007
23
    copyright which means it's the same wording in 2010.
24
            Where does the "new and improved" in 2010
25
    somehow change things?
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Well, it is certainly something
1
            MR. SHAH:
 2
    that she focused on in connection with the 2010
 3
    purchase that led her to believe that --
            THE COURT: But it wasn't different in the
 4
 5
    2008. You are not disputing that. I have the labels.
            MR. SHAH: We are not disputing that.
 6
 7
            THE COURT: Let me just stop you with 2010.
8
            How can you ever get, assuming you meet the
9
    other elements -- because I've already ruled,
    basically, at least as a pleading matter, whether the
10
    labels could be -- or an unlawful act, and assuming
11
12
    you get through ascertainable loss, how do you get to
13
    the causation prong when she's pointing out, as you
14
    are still trying to emphasize to me today, this "new
    and improved | language that was the same in 2008 and
15
16
    nothing changed?
17
            MR. SHAH: I think we get to the causation
    prong very readily, your Honor, and that is,
18
    fundamentally, the purchase was made on the
19
    representation that the products, the two products --
20
21
    the lotion and the bath product -- that they were
22
    clinically proven to help babies sleep better.
23
    for that representation and that understanding, based
    on the label and the other advertisements that
24
25
    Ms. Lieberson saw, we allege very specifically she
```

The "new and improved" tells the narrative and is part of the story, but it's not the predicate for the unlawful conduct.

THE COURT: I'm on the causation prong, and what I'm suggesting to you is, she's already made a determination the product doesn't work. So for you to argue that there was then the allegedly unlawful acts that appear on the label and/or the advertising that caused her to buy in 2010 fails of its own weight, it falls.

MR. SHAH: Well, I respectfully disagree because I still think that she purchased the product with the understanding that it would have efficacy as it related to helping her infant sleep better, and that was the fundamental -- and with respect to the causation prong, it's a matter seeing the representations, being exposed to the representations, making a purchasing decision based on the representations; the corollary being the additional allegation that but for the representation, she wouldn't have purchased the product.

THE COURT: It doesn't make sense. She had already purchased it in 2008 and made a determination it didn't work and nothing changed, and you have not pointed out anything that changed.

You have not adequately pled causation with regard to the 2010 buy. So put that aside.

Now, let's focus on 2008. 2008 I had already ruled on the first opinion, and, though, Mr. Kott, you seem to want me to revisit it, I'm not revisiting whether that language could set forth a claim that this was an unlawful conduct.

The question next, though, that we had was ascertainable loss. I'm only focusing on the label for now. We'll get to the advertising in a moment.

On the ascertainable loss, the manner in which it's now been pled is that Ms. Lieberson suggests that she paid a premium price for this product, these Bedtime Bath Products, as opposed to comparing them to the regular Johnson & Johnson baby lotions and bath products.

Have a seat for a second, Mr. Shah.

MR. SHAH: Thank you.

THE COURT: Mr. Kott, you focus on the fact that, one, in doing her comparison -- which is also a comparison of today prices, rather than 2008 prices, but she said that she paid that same price in 2008. That's what she says. Whether you believe it or not is not really -- that we can't go behind at the moment.

One of your other arguments is in the chart that she has provided in comparison, she doesn't use ShopRite, which is where she said she bought the product in 2008. I find the chart useless in that sense because it really doesn't tell me where she bought it, what the pricing was then, but she does say in her complaint, at the very least, that she did pay a premium price, and that she knows that the prices at the time were more for this product than for the regular products.

I don't think she has to give us the actual

I don't think she has to give us the actual cents that it were. I think the manner in which Mr. Shah has gone about it is a problem, but she's clearly said she paid a premium price back then.

Isn't that sufficient then for ascertainable loss?

MR. KOTT: No, your Honor, because what she has done is she has pled in conclusory terms what a comparable product is.

Hear me out on this a little longer, your Honor.

How do we know what a comparable product is?

Looking at actually what she pled in the first amended complaint, the one that is the subject, -- and I'm now referring to paragraph 44 -- she doesn't define what a

complaint is.

comparable product is. If we come over to the labels,
which are Exhibit A, Exhibits 1 and 2, the labels
indicate that our product has "natural calm essences"
which are both trademark and patent pending, not the
subject of the fraud claims. So our product is
advertised and has special ingredients -- aside from
the sleep part, aside from what the basis of the

So I would suggest, in response to the Court's question, she hasn't adequately pled it because she has a conclusion, comparable products, without telling us, the Court, or Johnson & Johnson, what the comparable products are.

Do they have this special patent pending trademark feature that's prominent? When you look at the label, it's right on the front. That's a prominent part. As I understand it, your Honor, that's something that deals in part with smell and what the product smells like and some other features. So we don't know what she means when she says "comparable."

I drive a Toyota Camry. Toyota Motor Company makes a Lexus. I don't think anybody would say my Camry is comparable to the Lexus. So, for that reason -- and, also, I think saying I paid similar

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                                                                 13
         prices --
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      2
                  THE COURT: Isn't that the summary judgment
      3
         argument though?
                 MR. KOTT: No.
      4
                  THE COURT: I disagree with you, Mr. Kott.
      5
                 First of all, I don't know what "natural calm"
      6
      7
                 That means nothing to me without some further
         means.
      8
         explanation. The position that the plaintiff takes,
      9
         that, basically, a J&J body lotion or bath product,
         another baby product that does those things is a
     10
         comparable product. Ultimately, I would need a lot
     11
     12
         more information to make sure that it is not a
     13
         comparable product or it is.
     14
                 On its face, it's a little bit different, I
     15
         think, when you are talking about cars, or we're
         talking about high-end beauty supplies, moisturizers
     16
     17
         for women, et cetera. We're talking about baby
         lotions and baby washes.
     18
                  You may be right in the end. But I think that
     19
         would be subject to some discovery as to what these
     20
     21
         additional products are, and do they make that or not
     22
         make that a comparable product.
     23
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On its face, at this moment, I think it is adequate to plead that the basic J&J body lotion or baby wash could be comparable and that the premium

24

1 | price was charged.

Your chart is of no help to me. But the fact that she said she paid a premium price in 2008, I'll take that, so that you may have an ascertainable loss.

And then with that, I do find that with regard to the 2008 labeling at least, the causation has been shown as well.

Let me turn to your advertising. Print advertising, you have given me nothing with regard to the magazines. You have not adequately pled as to any of the magazines.

MR. SHAH: If I may be heard briefly, your 13 Honor?

14 THE COURT: Yes.

MR. SHAH: Your Honor, with respect to specificity, -- and your Honor has written numerous decisions and has reiterated the standard many more times than I have; but from our perspective, with respect to consumer advertising, this pleading sets forth the precise magazines -- Parents, Parenting, and Baby Talk Magazine -- that she read during the time in or about January of 2008 dealing with that transaction.

It specifies that the representations that she saw in connection with that advertising were the

representations stating that the products at issue are clinically proven to help babies sleep better.

THE COURT: What you are suggesting, Mr.

Shah -- this is the problem with your pleading still as it stands with regard to the advertising. What you've done is gone about, you, or having your client find current ads -- by the way, you haven't even produced anything from magazines today; you've done that with regard to the internet -- gone on and found some things on the internet today or a year ago. You found this YouTube on British TV, something that aired not even here, and now have her basically adopt that to say: I saw similar ads in 2008.

With regard to the print, the magazines, one, here she doesn't even bother to attach, and you don't have to attach the actual ad. I'm not suggesting that. But she hasn't even suggested what the exact language was.

And the problem again is, your client -- and the cases have held this, and I know the <u>Dewey</u> case has mentioned it and others, that the information as to what you actually saw, heard, or read is within the plaintiff's control or knowledge. The notion of "I need discovery from a defendant" doesn't apply to what you saw back then.

She has not attempted to describe in the complaint her recollection of what actually was written, what were the words that she saw. Instead, what she does is she attaches things, except for the print, and says: "...and it was similar."

I don't understand her problem with saying: I saw -- if that's what she did and can recall: I've never seen a TV commercial that used the words "clinically proven" to help my baby sleep better, and I went out and I got this product. Why can't she say those things? Why does she have to take some television ad that she's finding on YouTube to suggest that?

MR. SHAH: Well, I think that setting aside what was attached as representative, I think that the pleading doesn't suggest that she's simply relying on something else.

In paragraph 46, she says: In reliance on the claim that the Bedtime Bath Products were clinically proven to help her four-month old sleep better; she then viewed the labels and purchased it in January 2008.

So the very specific allegations that the advertising that she saw in those magazines and the commercials pertained to the representation -- again,

that's at the heart of the case, and that is that the products are clinically proven to help babies sleep better.

THE COURT: She's got to say -- she's got to say, I saw a TV ad that said that this product was clinically proven to help my baby sleep better, and whatever else it may have said, including the three-step routine, or maybe it didn't say that. That's what she has to tell us.

What was the statement? Did she hear a statement that said "clinically proven along with this three-step routine"? Did she hear only a statement that said "clinically proven just using these products"? That's the point of knowing what was the statement that she replied on; you still failed to do that.

I'm not saying you have to attach, which is why it's not a problem that you'd say: Well, I have to go back and find an archive, perhaps document of this. No, you don't have to attach it. But she has to say it's from her own knowledge and recollection what she saw and when she saw it, and it doesn't have to be chapter and verse, but it has to be sufficient as to what was critical that she saw that she relied on in deciding to make a purchase. You haven't done

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18
    it here. So the label stays in. For the time being,
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 2
    the ads are out.
 3
            I know Mr. Kott would like me to prevent you
    from pleading again, but, frankly, since I still have
 4
    the label in, if you can do it, you can do it. You'll
 5
    make a motion, though, this time. I'm not doing as a
 6
 7
    matter of right. You can make a motion to amend to
8
    add any ads that you want if you can plead them in a
9
    better fashion as to the 2008 purchase, not as to
    2010. That claim is dismissed.
10
            Mr. Kott, I do not agree with your motion that
11
12
    as a matter of law the Court can rule that it was not
13
    deceptive -- that it was not unlawful, so the claim
14
    stays in and goes forward.
            I would like to speak to counsel a few minutes
15
    about the case, and I'll speak to you in chambers
16
17
    about it.
            We'll do an order.
18
            THE CLERK: All rise.
19
            (Proceedings concluded.)
20
21
    ///
22
23
24
25
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19 1 2 CERTIFICATE 3 4 5 I, Vincent Russoniello, Official United States 6 7 Court Reporter and Certified Court Reporter of the 8 State of New Jersey, do hereby certify that the 9 foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the proceedings as taken stenographically by and before me 10 11 at the time, place and on the date hereinbefore set 12 forth. I do further certify that I am neither a relative 13 14 nor employee nor attorney nor counsel of any of the parties to this action, and that I am neither a 15 relative nor employee of such attorney or counsel and 16 17 that I am not financially interested in this action. 18 19 20 21 S/Vincent Russoniello Vincent Russoniello, CCR 22 Certificate No. 675 Date: June 29, 2012

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